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2017 'Why Humanities?' Finalist: A Letter to My Past Self

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Why Humanities? Contest

Finalist 2017

A Letter to My Past Self

Aline Nguyen

Dear Aline at 18,

I wish I could tell you how your years of post-secondary education are going to unfold. I know there's a lot going through your mind right now. I know that you have just told your parents about your decision to abandon your pursuit for a degree in biological sciences and a career in the medical field. I know that your passion for teaching has steered you in a different direction and I admire your courage for choosing to follow your heart by immersing yourself in the study of the arts and social sciences.

I'm sure you're probably wondering, though, how the arts and social sciences will prepare you for your dream career as a teacher. While I have no intention of ruining the surprises that life has in store for you, I will tell you that majoring in French Studies and minoring in Psychology will be one of the best decisions you will ever make. You will be challenged to think critically as you study the works of some of the best authors in history. You will question the extent to which various psychologists' experiments have impacted our society. You will exhibit a curiosity about different cultures that will propel you to participate in a three-month exchange to a country halfway around the world. Experiences like these, although difficult at times, will expose you to the skills that you will need to not only teach, but to explore every beautiful aspect of this world and the

role that you play in it. You will return home as a different person, a better person than the one who left. Most importantly, you will realize that the academic discipline that you have devoted your time to studying was in everything that you have done in the past, are doing in the present, and will do in the future.

My word of advice to you, a future educator, is to bear in mind that teaching students is more than just showing them how to conjugate verbs or how to write an argumentative essay on the nature-nurture debate. Whether your students are analyzing a case study or visiting a museum, always encourage them to approach every learning opportunity with curiosity. Motivate them to think critically, to ask questions, to appreciate different cultures, and to never stop learning. In doing so, you will help them to understand what you will understand in due time: why the humanities matter.

Best of luck, my dear. You've got this.

All my love,
Aline at 23